

***Remarks for Commissioner David Littell
Department of Environmental Protection
at
Signing ceremony of Governor John E. Baldacci's
Executive Order
Promoting Safer Chemicals in Consumer Products & Services
February 22, 2006 - Augusta, Maine***

Maine is a national leader in reducing the use of toxic chemicals and substances – this Executive Order further protects Maine's citizens from unnecessary exposure to toxic chemicals and keeps the toxics out of Maine's environment.

Maine's recent leadership in reducing the exposure of Maine's children, workers, citizens and environment to toxic substances includes:

- Maine has instituted a first-in-the nation program to recycle old computers and televisions requiring manufacturer responsibility to recycle the toxic chemicals released into commerce. This electronic waste recycling program will keep toxic materials out of our incinerators and landfills and therefore out of our environment.
- Maine has been scrutinizing the recently discovered rapid build-up of brominated flame retardants ("BFR"s) in the human body and our environment. In 2003, research on the health effects of certain BFRs and exponentially increasing levels on our environment resulted in legislative action to remove the most problematic of these chemicals from the marketplace. Maine's further efforts to better understand brominated flame retardants have resulted in collaborative work between Maine CDC and the Maine Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health at the University of Southern Maine to conduct cutting edge research on the developmental effects of DECA BDE. This research seeks to replicate and go beyond studies conducted to date on the toxicology of the "Deca" BFR compound, and this research is occurring in Maine at a newly constructed state-of-the-art toxicology facility located in Portland.
- Last year the Legislature voted overwhelmingly to create a Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund to fund education and outreach to prevent both childhood and worker lead poisoning.

- Maine's landmark laws ban the sale of mercury switches, thermometers and other measuring devices.
- Maine's program requires auto manufacturers to pay a bounty on auto switches containing mercury. This law was challenged in court and the principle of manufacturer responsibility was upheld paving the way for legislation in other states and with other products.
- Maine is supporting basic research in development of green chemistry products through the Maine Green Chemistry Consortium at the University of Maine.

Our everyday choices of products we use in our kitchens, bathrooms, garages and yards have environmental and public health consequences – many of those products contain toxic chemicals. Some trends are a cause of concern. For example, the home use of pesticides (rodenticides, insecticides, cleaning, and yard care products) in Maine has more than tripled from 1995 to 2004 from 800,000 lbs to 3 million pounds. Most accidental poisonings in Maine are caused by household products.

Many lower toxicity choices are available for certain products and that's exactly the type of safer alternatives that the Task Force to Promote Safer Chemicals in Consumer Products will examine. Development of safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals in Maine has the potential to improve public health, protect the environment, spur business growth, create jobs, and reduce the costs of health care and special education.

Under this Executive Order, the DEP looks forward to working with the Department of Economic and Community Development to coordinate the Task Force to Promote Safer Chemicals in Consumer Products to make Maine's citizens and environment healthier and more productive at the same time.